

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Neville Wakefield, "Drawing Restraint 9: Matthew Barney," *ArtReview*, May 2006.



**MATTHEW BARNEY**  
**APRIL 7 - MAY 13, 2006**

Opening Reception Thursday, April 6, 5:30 - 7:30PM

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**GLADSTONE GALLERY**

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## DRAWING RESTRAINT 9: MATTHEW BARNEY

Made over a period of nearly two decades, Matthew Barney's *Drawing Restraint* series has now moved out of the eclipse of the *Cremaster* project into the light of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Initially conceived as 'facilities to defeat the facility of drawing', Barney's first restraint environments, created while he was still at Yale, mixed the mythology of Harry Houdini, the artist's own experience as an athlete, and the training apparatus of the gym and football field.

Drawing from the escapologist's understanding of restraint not as mechanistic imposition but as an internal problem, the ramps, inclines, tethers and shelves that formed the artist's bondage became a matter less of physical constraint than of mental discipline. The resulting marks on his body represented Barney's desire to escape his physical limitations and express himself within a prosthetic programme in which the drawn form extends the limits of physical possibility.

As the series has progressed, different character laminations have been added and, by *Drawing Restraint 7*, the shackles had metamorphosed and the prosthetics extended to include narrative and horns. Presented as a three-channel video, Barney's subject remains the same, albeit this time in the form of a couple of goats. These mythopoeic creatures, chauffeured through Manhattan in a blue fluorescent bathysphere, are contesting the drawn form.

Earlier on, the artist used barbells and football-training 'blocking sleds' as drawing instruments. But here the physical trials of energy versus inertia are opened up to encompass a libidinal landscape in which all creative energy is reproductive and sexual in nature. Such was the theme of the subsequent series in which a line drawn on paper culminated in scenarios of erotic expenditure describing the free fall of libidinal energy.

*DR9* is a return to film and represents the most ambitious of the series. Shot largely on a Japanese whaling vessel, the feature-length film transforms the oceanic mythologies of the great cetacean mammal. It is a cannibalistic love story drawn, as it were, from the inky depths and offered up to the public as a strange and compelling spectacle.

Neville Wakefield

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Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint 9*, 2005, production photographs

Matthew Barney, *The occidental guest*, to 13 May, Gladstone Gallery, New York (+1 212 206 9300, [gladstonegallery.com](http://gladstonegallery.com)). *Drawing Restraint*, 23 June-17 Sept, SF MOMA (+1 415 357 4000, [sfmoma.org](http://sfmoma.org))

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